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THE BLOOD STAINED ROSE

A ROMANCE

BY

LILLIAN SINCERE AHRENS



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Lillian Sincere Ahrens

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ROSE

A ROMANCE

BY
LILLIAN SINCERE AHRENS

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A ROMANCE

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Lillian Sincere Ahrens



*"In every stern and unimaginative age, there
is more danger to be feared from the want
of romance, than from excess of it."*

* * *

*So, my friend, at this age most opportune,
A romance laced with smiles and tears,
I present to thee.
If thou would'st thy soul with garlands
Of ambrosial sweets enchain, I pray thee,
With my worthy players dwell awhile.*

PART ONE.

On a spring morn, aglow with happiness,
Marian roamed her garden fair, and cried,
"I seek thee, love; where are thou?"

The lingering gold of dawn, the violets
from purple bed,

The fragrance of the sweets of spring suf-
fused her thoughts.

While toying with a rose she pricked her
hand,

But undisturbed, and with playful mien, she
stained the white rose red.

Then tossing it with childish mirth, she cried,
"The youth who this rose finds, I'll wed!"

The encrimsoned rose lay prone. Marian
on her way went singing,

But ere she had taken many steps, she
 paused,

And then she turned; for, having o'erheard
 her boast,

And lured by the cadence of her voice—

Two youths, as if by magic, from the road
 appeared,

And with accord made haste to claim the rose.

Now Marian, noting two hands about to
 clash,

To a nearby rose bower hied.

Then one youth spoke. " 'Tis strange," he
 said,

"This meeting, as by God divined."

The other sprang away, as though the cal-
 loused hand

Had been an adder's fang, held out to him.

“Nay sir, no harm I ween, to either—

Thou’rt heir to yonder rose, perhaps, and
too, a prince thou art,

Still, must thou worthy prove thyself.”

The prince, stung to the quick, cried,

“Thou ruffian. One more word and thou’lt
go

By my sword o’er yonder cliff!”

“Nay, thou would’st not pierce this heart,
though rough;

Nor still a tongue not taught to say fine
words.

Thine eyes speak tenderly. And, strangely,
as I gaze on thee,

I think, though fine, thou’rt very like myself.

A look! A word! I beg thee! Wilt not
speak?

Then bear with me until my story's told—
I'll not be long in telling it; and then,
If proved kin by my story,
Then hast thou won, mayhap, the trophy
sought."

The handsome prince laughed loud!

" 'Tis well, mad man, but make thy story
short!"

(And now it came to pass that Marian's
friend,

Her lady in waiting, by name of Enid known,
Appeared on the castle step, in search of
Marian.

She gazed around with shaded eyes,
And saw two youths standing as in dispute,
And from her hiding place a glimpse of
Marian's skirt.

Well knowing how the intruders to evade,
In time to hear the story, she reached the
bower.)

“My name is John; by friends I’m Brawny
called;

My mother? my mother! Ah memory dear!
Her slender body swayed by grace, her eyes
love-lit,

And lips that uttered but the sweetest sound.

’Tis good to know she was my mother!

Thou look’st as if thou might’st have known
her,

My mother, with her enkindled soul.

My father a sailor was, under whose rough
cloak

There beat a heart of fibre fine—

A man whose sleep was lulled by winds,

Who dreamed not only of his ship's fair
 bow,

But all that lay beyond.

A brother had I, a handsome but frail lad.

One day while he lay feeble on his bed,

My mother o'er him bent with tender care,

When suddenly the wild lash on the water's
 edge,

The gull's shrill cry! The rift in the clouds!

Told us The Hawk had come to port,

And my father to sea was called.

'Twere well to take him with thee, John,'
 my mother gently said,

'Nay, thou'rt not frightened at the thought,

A roughing on the sea will give him life!'

My father looked aghast!

'Thou'rt jesting, wife—would'st part with
him, thy little one?'

'Take him with thee,' my mother begged.

Thou'lt bring him back pink as a rose!

And then, the sacrifice so bravely made, she
wept

As tenderly my father from the bed lifted
my brother.

'No tears, dear wife!' he cried,

'I'll bring him back in lively tune; and John,
Take care of her. 'Twill not be long.'

So, they sailed away, while we were left
alone.

We waited, waited. And on that dreadful
day,

When earth and heaven clashed, a message
came, that read,

'While homeward bound, down went The
Hawk with all on board.'

My heart breaks at the thought.

Still we waited—that tragedy of waiting!

Each incoming ship was a hope renewed,
that they were spared.

'Twas vain. . . .

As years rolled on, my mother aged.

And though she called me oft her all in all,

I could not be to her what all might be,

Nor could I bring them back.

To make a matter short, she would not live.

'Bury me, too, at sea,' she begged;

'There will I find, perhaps, the ones I love.'

And there she lies, at sea, my mother.

Whereas I seek the two for love of whom
she died.

And now, as I before thee stand, dear prince,
Though thou art older grown, thou'rt like
my brother

More than any I have known."

The story finished, Marian and her friend,
Deeper amid the roses stole, and stilled their
sobs.

The prince grew pale, and shuddered as if
something stirred his soul.

"Now thy story's told; and though with
eagerness I'd grasp the rose,

I must abide until I've spoken to the end.

"I too, a lovely mother had," he said,

"Though only from my father learned;

Yet in fancy I my mother knew—

Like as a phantom from another world.

And, ne'er shall I forget, in a ship's bow was
I laid,

A frail lad, by the sailors petted much.

Under their rough, yet tender care, I grew—
Though not much knowledge from books
had I, still,

Amidst the rigging high, I learned the mys-
tery of the moon;

For pastime, I heard yarns by sailors spun.

One called Dan a story told about a prince.
He said 'Aladine,' (so was I called)

'A queen I know will some day seek thee out,
and make thee prince of her domain;

Thou'lt be her solace for her only son,

Lost in a drunken brawl. I at that time his
valet was,

And I so loved the lad, I could not stay.

The queen, heeding my discontent, bade me
to go.

"Farewell Daniel," she said, "Seek thou for
me another,

To take his place; let him be of tender years;
It matters not, if lowly his birth should be;
Still it becomes a prince to be well knit and
strong of heart!"'

I laughed at Dan, and at his seaman's tale,
I vowed no queen was great enough to tear
me from my father.

'Twas not long after Dan his story told
That darkness and disaster came.
'Twas as if The Hawk by fear was stirred!

A hellish element appeared to crush her bow,
and tear her sail;

My father lashed me to the mast.

And, though I struggled to be free,
I was like a mouse twixt a cat's jaw,
So closely was I bound. From the mast,
In awe, I viewed the bravery of my father,
As o'er the storm-beaten deck, with fearful
cry!

He urged his men, till hoarse of voice and
weak from injury,

He laid him down to die. 'Aladine, thou'lt
be saved!' he cried.

'I would have waited as I promised her,
To bring thee back pink as a rose, but now,
'Tis late, too late! Perhaps thou'lt find thy
mother,

And thy brother. But blame me not for
dying,

Ere I brought thee back to her in lively
tune.'

Then in delirium he tossed, and wrung my
heart

Crying, 'No tears, dear wife, I'll bring him
back!'

'Twas pitiful, I begged to die with him.

I tried to break my chains, but vain, all vain!

And, as with glazed eyes he gazed at me,

It seemed too much, too much, to bear.

As twilight gathered round the death
doomed ship,

So many wild seas braved, with one last
throb gave way,

And thinking 'twas the end, weakly I cried,
'Father! my father!'

Out from the darkness a voice leaped—Dan's
voice—

‘I'll save thee, lad!’

Then all was dark for many months.

One day I woke to find myself in princely
robe,

And standing at my bed with men of state,
Was Dan, the sailor who my fortune told.
‘I told thee, lad,

A queen would seek thee out and make thee
prince of her domain.

How may I serve thee now, dear Majesty?’
he asked,

Kissing my hand with stately grace.

‘Ah, Dan, my friend, still thou my friend
wilt be;

And too, court jester, to make me merry
with thy sea yarns gay,

But sometime we shall speak of him, my
father.' "

After Aladine his story told, and brother was
sure of brother,

John, a promise to fulfill, lifted the rose
with tender care,

And placed it in Aladine's hand, saying,

"Yes, thou'rt heir not only to the rose and
to thy princedom great,

But to the heart of a maiden fair, and too,
a brother's love,

There is no fairer token I may give

Than this red rose. Wear it upon thy heart,
my brother: it is thine."

PART TWO

PART TWO

The story heard of how the brothers met,
Marian and her friend, thrilled to the quick,
Left their hiding a-tremble; and stole
Along an unseen path of drooping trees.
Around Marian's soul a sweetness clung,
Like the fragrance of a rose new born; and
 Enid's heart
Beat quickly 'gainst her breast.
At the Castle door they turned; and from
 afar,
Saw two youths wend their way unto the
 Castle Aladine.
So it came to pass, at the Castle Aladine,
John by his brother's sword a knight was
 made;

Tho difficult at first, he the court's manner
learned.

And so, a great change in his life was
wrought.

As time wore on, Marian found Heart's
ease in thoughts of Aladine,

While Enid's head was well nigh filled with
dreams of John.

But, alas! love oft is wafted by a fickle wind,
And is borne astray in the wafting.

So it happened that on one June day,
Aladine,

By princely duties worn, unaccompanied by
his brother,

Rode down the castle path, granting his
steed full rein

To wander at will; and as if by mystic force

He was carried through a wondrous scene,
in harmony wrought.

Not far off a rising hill bathed in the sun,
Where lambkins drowsed in the noonday
heat.

And then he heard the symphony of song-
sters through the woods,

Felt the soft breeze that stirred the wide
open petals of roses,

Lingered at a mirror stream by water lilies
graced,

Reflecting a sapphire sky; and at last,

Reached the enchanted spot, where first the
rose awaited him.

Coincidentally strange as it may seem, Enid,
worn by sleepless nights,

Unable to endure the loud beating of her
heart,

Sought, for repose, this very paradise.

So they met; Aladine with head drawn high
—noble, serene;

And Enid, forgetting Marian, her soul of
modesty undressed,

Stood quickly clothed in woman's wiles.

And in this robe she boldly greeted him.

Aladine, caught by the flame within her eye,
held out his arms.

As lip met quivering lip all save that moment
was forgot.

Though but a moment, still an eternity it
seemed to them.

Then gently he loosed his hold and spoke in
tender terms.

He told her, that, through a Blood Stained
Rose with abandon tossed,

He found the road to a maiden's heart, and
too, a brother's love.

Enid in feigned surprise, after a moment
said,

"Wonderful Aladine, the rose worn near thy
heart

Was by my own blood stained."

Then on his shoulder Enid hid her face,
That in her eyes the lie he might not read.
Once more he held her form in fond embrace,
And then they parted, vowing with hearts
and lips, a tryst they'd keep.

'Twas in the time of their many trysts, that
Marian,

Wondering at the cold mien of her friend,
contrived by watchfulness

To solve the riddle. . . .

On one moonlit eve, while wandering from
the Castle Everywhere

In search of Enid, Marian stopped with
sudden fear

And like a startled fawn fleeing the moun-
tainside,

Knowing the hunter near, hastened from the
crunching sound

Of horse's hoofs; but too late to evade the
intruder,

For on his steed, outlined against the sky,
Sat the Prince Aladine.

'Twas thus the two whom fate decreed were
justly one, to be,

Gazed each at other, with soul wrapped, in-
tent;

In his eyes was pictured beauty of which he
had not dreamed.

And she, Ah! ne'er had purer glance been
lifted to his own.

Aladine slipped lightly from his steed,
And bowing low o'er Marian's hand, with
emotion deep,

Spoke of the night coming on. He told her
As a brother might, it was not wise, so fair
a maid

Should walk abroad, alone; praying the hon-
or of accompanying her.

Marian smiled consent. All the way
He spoke of moon-lit nights, and flower
paths,
Until at last, reaching Castle Everywhere,
Marian bade him enter, her guest.
He followed her.

Meanwhile, Enid perturbed because of Alad-
ine's stay,

Sought him in the usual path, until worn with
vain seeking,

She reached the Castle gate. It opened wide
to receive her.

And behold! the Castle Everywhere,

With lords and ladies decked in jewels rare,

Vied with the stars and lights in shimmering!

Then came the dance with stately grace,

By spirit strings of sweetest music led; and
laughter,

And lovers' mirth like ripples on a waveless
sea;

'Twas a scene most beautiful to look on.

But Enid, her face pressed against a pane,
and her dazed eyes

Gazing at the two who led the dance,
Felt the blood close round her heart, and
swooned.

Then, as if by God-given strength restored,
she reached the castle door;

There pages bore her in and to her room.

At the stroke of twelve, the dance o'er,
Aladine bade his love farewell,

And promised that they'd meet again. And
Marian at last,

Having found her love, and thinking it must
be by the whole world shared,

Sought Enid in her room. And with caresses
fond,

Marian in joyful tone, spoke of her love.

"Nay, weep not, thou too shall taste the
sweets of love,

For much he spoke of his brother John.
Perchance——”

Enid answered not; but into the pillow hid
her face,

That Marian might not fathom her distress.

And in the days that followed, Aladine was
’twixt heaven and hell,

Between duty and love, from one to the
other thrown.

Now John, not knowing of his brother’s
adventures,

Thought strange of his many journeys and
spoke his fears to Dan.

Two heads, though one a jester’s was, proved
far more wise than one.

It was decreed that John, who in form Alad-
ine resembled,

Should thus clothe himself and follow him.

Meanwhile Enid, with jealous rage,

Contrived to seek Marian's doom by mean
deceit;

One day, before her she appeared in feigned
grief;

Marian, with quick sympathy, inquired the
cause. "Ah me!

To be for one short hour a princess fair and
dressed in royal robe

Would an ambition crown," sighed Enid.

Said Marian, with trustful mien, "It can be
done!"

So, as by magic wand, Enid in royal robe
was gowned;

"Mind Enid, for one hour and no more,

Mayest thou enjoy the present role!" Marian
gave command;

And Enid with a Judas kiss for Marian's
favor kind,

Hastened from the Castle Everywhere, a
tryst to keep with Aladine.

'Tis strange how providence impedes the
wiles of men;

While Aladine was on his way, Enid to meet
His steed upreared, and on its hauches stood.

Meanwhile, John, in Aladine's attire was
seeking him;

Unacquainted with the road, he turned here
and there, in vain,

Then wended his way unto the Castle gate.

And it so happened that the gate oped wide
to receive him,

Who in all appearance was his brother
Aladine.

Now Enid, in the garden waiting her tryst
to keep,

Heard a horse's tread upon the gravel path,
and thinking

'Twas Aladine, she ran into the road;
She seized the bridle of John's steed, and
With impatient mien inquired the cause of
his delay.

John abashed at this strain; awaited her
further speech.

"Thou'rt late, my Aladine! See, I dressed
in royal robe for thee—

That thou might'st love me more.

Ah! Why hast thou grown cold?

Have I offended thee, dear love?" she asked.

John, knowing no reply, unable to resist her,
Took Enid to his heart.

Now Aladine, once more upon his way,
Urging his steed with well-set spur, and,
 anxiously bespent,
Entered the Castle gate.

Meanwhile, the hour long passed, Marian
 sought her friend.

With clasped hands and breathing quickly
 drawn,

She made her way as though to certain
 misery.

Now step by step unfolds the well wrought
 plot.

Enid thinking the visitor Aladine, and know-
 ing that his heart.

By right divine, belonged to Marian,
Branded Marian a snake—saying her beauty
 and soft words

Were but a lure to lead him to his doom.
Then false tears followed.

"Hast ever heard the story of the Blood
Stained Rose?

If not, I'll tell it; perhaps 'twill comfort
thee."

At these, John's words, she thought him
stricken mad,

For speaking of the Rose as if 'twas some-
thing new.

Then as though smitten by an unseen hand,
She gazed at him, wild eyed, inquiring who
he was

And what his purpose. A moment more,
The masqueraders having come in contact
with the truth,

Were seized with sudden fear.

'Twas then, heavy clouds hung in the sky—
a warning to all treachery.

Aladine from afar, fancied he saw
Marian in another's arms; that one much
like himself;

And so with spurs set deep into his steed, he
vowed revenge!

Heavier grew the clouds, as if the world
drew near its end.

Enid her head turned quickly and tried to fly
From what was coming; 'twas not long be-
fore the brothers met.

And John, white and trembling, begged
mercy, saying,

"I followed thee, my brother, it is true—
Thou seemed so unlike thyself, and loving
thee,

I could not bear to see thee thus."

But Aladine, half blind with rage, unsheathed
his sword.

Commanding John to draw. "Impostor!"
cried he,

Laughing at his excuse for treason; thinking,
of course, Enid was Marian.

"Fight, thou dog," cried Aladine. "Thou
callest thyself brother?"

Nay, thou liest! Thou hast stolen my
brother's name.

And his story. And I believed thee! Oh
God! I believed thee!"

John, his heart most rent at Aladine's re-
proach,

Baring his breast, cried, "Strike then if thou
wilt,

Unsheathed my sword remains; 'gainst thee
I cannot raise it."

"Coward!" shrieked Aladine, as with a blow
he felled his brother.

Then Enid with remorse near mad, her face
averted,

And Marian with saddened heart, coming
upon the scene,

Stood as if angel struck. Aladine to the
truth awakening,

Knelt on the ground, and tried to stem the
precious blood

That flowed from his brother's side. Marian,
too, prayed him to speak.

Meanwhile, Dan was led by fate to follow
John

For providence directs the destiny of man,
leading him on,

Light as a sunbeam, darting here and there,
And ever along the right road.

O'er the four a cloak of agony fell.

Enid, with contrite heart, sought Marian's
forgiveness.

Marian, bewildered, replied, "I've trusted
thee through years, my friend;

Ah, speak not, that I may trust thee still!"

"Nay, but I am guilty! Only I am guilty!"
Enid cried.

Marian would brook no further speech.
"Not now;

Not while a brother bleeds," she gently said,
As, tearing from off her gown a strip of silk,
She bound the wound. John, gazing upon
her, murmured,

"Angel, my mother was like thee."

But pity 'twas to see the grief of Aladine.

He from his bosom took the Blood-Stained
Rose

And placed it in his brother's hand. "Live,
live," he said.

"And all I own is thine, my brother! Oh,
my brother!"

Now Dan by presage led, 'mongst them ap-
peared—and stood

Like a heaven-guided moonbeam

Lingering on a pit, as if to save the passer-by

To his quick eye their plight revealed,

And knowing that John's disguise was all its
cause,

He decided on his course, and feigned sur-
prise;

Inquiring why, as he was full cause of the
drama,

He was kept from its rehearsing.

“By my advice, John sought thee, Aladine!

Ah, thou knowest not that I have wandered
o’er this garden fair

And, all unseen, have formed this plot.

’Twas a pitiful mistake I made, urging my
players to appear in masquerade,

Knowing full well false garbs make play-
things out of hearts.”

The truth half told by Dan, like a lightning
flash,

Was its cause revealed to all, save Marian.

Aladine with gratitude that knew not bounds,

Bowed o’er the hand of his friend, and drew
it to his lips.

Dan all but swooned at the caress,
And John, as with new life instilled, vowed
that he'd live,
And, a-tremble with happiness, Enid thanked
Dan and God.
Then a moment passed; and, in that lapse
of time, Marian,
Her heart tipped by the arrow, doubt, and
with throbbing pulse,
Like the martyr who in the arena has not yet
felt his soul
God-kissed, but in fear notes only the lion's
jaw,
Gazed at them with a burning question in her
eyes.
Though an aeon of time it seemed to her
who waited to be judged,

'Twas but a moment; for Marian, her soul
Heaven-swayed,

Took Enid to her heart and called her sister.
And then, and then, like elements together
drawn,

Marian found herself in her lover's arms;
While Enid bent o'er John with tender care.
Now, conscious only of the sacrifice, Aladine,
Placed in the jester's trembling hand The
Blood-Stained Rose.

“ 'Tis thine, thou blessed peacemaker, thou
friend of friends!”

By a formula divine, in that hand a miracle
was wrought!

For a Power had caused the Rose once more
to bloom.

The mist cleared and the sun shone down on
Aladine

As with unsheathed sword he bade the jester
kneel,

And entitled him a lord.

Now, though the story is at its close, we
must not miss

The pageant that took place at Castle Every-
where.

Ne'er was scene more beautiful; with courtier
train

The wedding party in flower-decked floats,
And chariots of gold, by proud horses drawn,
Rode from the Castle Everywhere through
sylvan paths

O'er hallowed ground to the spot made dear-
est by the Rose.

There they stopped; and kneeling under an
ether canopy of blue

They bound themselves in wedlock, soul to
soul.

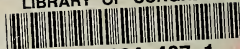
Dan, pressing to his heart his full-blown rose
Low whispered: "Thou wert Blood Stained,
Not destined to long life, until by virtue
kissed.

Ah, beauteous one, Heaven christens thee,
Immortality!"





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